



Helping Your Child with Weekly Spellings

A practical guide for families from Year 1 to Year 6

How spellings work at Gateford Park Primary School

This year, we have agreed a consistent approach to learning and practising spellings across all classes from Year 1 to Year 6.

Each Friday, children will stick a printed list of their new weekly spellings into their planner. They will have opportunities to practise these words in school throughout the week, including during morning tasks, and we ask that they also spend a little time practising them at home.

Children will be tested on their spellings the following Friday. The tests will be marked by a teacher or teaching assistant, and the result will be recorded in the child's planner so that parents and carers can see how they have done.

Please ensure that your child brings their planner to school every day, particularly on Fridays, so that new spellings can be added and results recorded.

Some children may be given different spellings that are more closely matched to their current learning needs. This allows every child to practise words that provide an appropriate level of support and challenge.

Practicing at home

Learning spellings does not need to mean repeatedly copying a list of words. Short, regular practice is usually most effective. Aim for around five to ten minutes at a time and choose a different activity each day. It is better for a child to learn a few words securely than to become worried or frustrated by the whole list.

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Practical ways to practice

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Look Say Cover Write Check

Look carefully at the word, say it aloud, cover it, write it from memory, then uncover and check. If it is incorrect, focus on the tricky part and try once more.

Spot the tricky part

Highlight, underline or circle the letters that need special attention, such as becau se, peo ple or diffi cult. Write those letters in a different colour.

Sound it out

Say the word slowly and listen for each sound. Use fingers, counters or buttons to represent the sounds before choosing the letters.

Break it into syllables

Clap or tap the beats in longer words, such as re mem ber, com mu ni ty or tem per a ture. Write one syllable at a time.

Rainbow writing

Write the word once, then trace over it in several colours while saying the letters or sounds.

Build the word

Use magnetic letters, letter tiles, Scrabble tiles or letters written on small pieces of paper. Mix them up and rebuild the word.

Pyramid words

Build the spelling one letter at a time: c, ca, cat, catc, catch.

Word stairs

Write each spelling as though it is climbing a staircase.

Word hunt

Hide spellings on sticky notes. When one is found, the child reads it, spells it aloud or uses it in a sentence.

Air writing and tracing

Write the word in the air with a finger, hand or elbow, or trace it on a table, someone's back, in sand, flour or shaving foam.

Missing letters

Write the word with one or two gaps, such as bec_use or fri_nd, and ask your child to complete it.

Scrambled words

Mix up the letters and ask your child to place them in the correct order. Keep the original word nearby for checking.

More games and challenges

Memory pairs

Make two cards for each word. Turn them face down and find matching pairs. Read and spell each word as it is revealed.

Roll and spell

Match each dice number to a task: spell aloud, rainbow write, use in a sentence, identify the tricky part, write from memory or test an adult.

Write a silly sentence

Use one or more spellings in a funny sentence. Unusual sentences are often easier to remember.

Draw the meaning

Turn the spelling into a picture that shows what it means. For example, write rainbow in the shape of a rainbow.

Create a mnemonic

Invent a memorable phrase in which the words begin with the letters in the spelling. Children often remember their own funny ideas best.

Find words within words

Look for familiar parts inside a longer word, such as to get her, teach er or help ful.

Sort the spellings

Group words by sound, spelling pattern, prefix, suffix, number of syllables or words that do not follow the usual rule.

Explore word families

Collect related words such as help, helpful, helpless and unhelpful, or sign, signal and signature.

Beat the adult

Let your child test you. Make an occasional deliberate mistake and ask them to explain and correct it.

Quick fire spellings

Spell aloud while throwing a ball, doing star jumps, walking upstairs or travelling in the car. Say one letter for each movement.

Sentence dictation

Say a short sentence containing one weekly spelling. Your child writes the sentence and checks the target word.

Spelling detective

Write a short paragraph containing deliberately misspelt weekly words. Ask your child to find and correct them.

Make a mini quiz

Create a wordsearch, crossword, matching game or multiple choice challenge for someone else to complete.

Supporting children who find spelling difficult

- Practise two or three words at a time rather than presenting the full list.
- Keep sessions short and finish before your child becomes tired or frustrated.
- Say the word clearly and talk about its meaning.
- Use movement, colour, magnetic letters and spoken practice as well as pencil and paper.
- Revisit words over several days and praise effort, careful checking and improvement.
- If a word is incorrect, help your child notice and correct the tricky part rather than copying the whole word many times.
- Let the class teacher know if spelling practice regularly causes significant worry or takes an excessive amount of time.

Most importantly, keep practice positive. Making mistakes is part of learning, and noticing why a spelling is incorrect is often when the most useful learning takes place.